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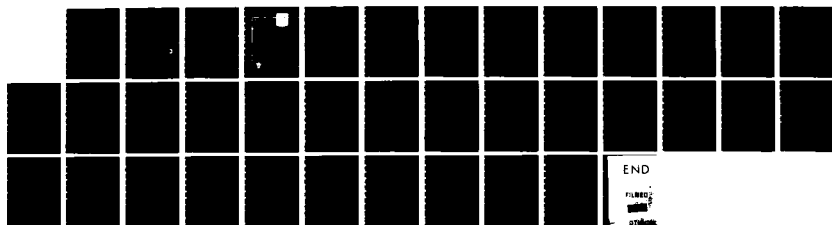
THE SOVIET OFFICER PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM(U) ARMY  
WAR COLL CARLISLE BARRACKS PA M L WOOD 06 APR 84

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What are the major components of the Soviet Officer Personnel Management System (SOPMS)? Are the prescribed procedures and the actual working procedures mutually supportive? Information analyzed was gathered from current Soviet public media documents, defectors, Soviet emigrants and contemporary unclassified publications. The Soviet military education subsystem from premilitary training courses through their senior service college is reviewed (See over)

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as are the subsystems of promotions, distributions/ assignments and separations. SOPMS and its subsystems look good on paper, but the increasing Soviet media exposure of officer corruption and examples of poor leadership depict major weakness/failures in the system. The triple chain of command supervisory system (Army, KGB, Communist Party) stifles initiative and often works in divergent directions. Loyalty to one's supervisor takes priority over loyalty to the army. Taking care of oneself comes before taking care of one's troops. Soviet officials are aware of the gulf between prescribed and actual practices and have instituted programs to close the gap and improve the officer corps, e.g., better schools, better training. Afghanistan is being used as a training ground to encourage more initiative in leadership exercises on the part of officers. SOPMS has improved in the last decade and the Soviet officer probably is better than his WWII counterpart. The final verdict on whether SOPMS is successful or not will have to be decided at a much later date or on a future battlefield.

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# STUDENT ESSAY

THE SOVIET OFFICER PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

BY

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MAY 16 1984

6 APRIL 1984



US ARMY WAR COLLEGE, CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA

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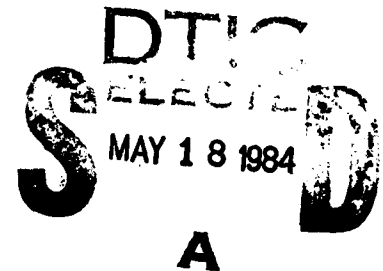
**USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM**

**THE SOVIET OFFICER PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

**INDIVIDUAL ESSAY**

by

Lieutenant Colonel Mary L. Wood  
Adjutant General Corps



US Army War College  
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013  
6 April 1984

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## ABSTRACT

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World War 2

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## THE SOVIET OFFICER PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

An officer personnel management system in any army consists of certain basic subsystems. In general, they are officer acquisitions, initial training, professional development, promotions, distribution/assignments and a separation/retirement subsystem. On paper, the personnel management systems of the armies of two nations may appear to be similarly constructed. The official guidance given to the officer corps of one army might be equally relevant for the officer corps of another nation's army. The following quote emphasizes this point:

To exercise effective troop control the commander must be characterized by such qualities as ideological staunchness, devotion to his people, professional competence in warfare and military equipment, strong willpower, organizational ability, reasonable initiative and ability to act on his own, a sense of responsibility for the fighting proficiency and education of his subordinates, and a self-critical approach towards the appraisal of the states of affairs.

That guidance was to the officer corps of the Soviet Army and came from their General of the Army, P. Lushev.<sup>1</sup>

For an American army officer to follow General Lushev's guidance would probably result in the development of a good solid officer. However, the true measurement of any personnel management system is the product it produces not just the policies it professes. Just describing the prescribed procedures is not enough. The actual workings of the system must also be analyzed.

This paper will discuss both aspects of the Soviet officer system and attempt to analyze the results. However, before doing so, it is necessary to state that information on this subject has for the most



part been provided by defectors and former Soviet citizens who served their mandatory military obligation as officers and enlisted members prior to emigrating. The Soviet public media has been an additional source and in recent months it has been quite critical of internal conditions in the Army especially the officer corps.

The first step on the road to becoming a Soviet officer may have come very early in one's life and probably took place when he had his first official contact with the Soviet military.

### PREMILITARY TRAINING

To help understand the mind-set of the Soviet officer and his psychological development one needs to understand how the military has influenced his way of life since early childhood. According to Chris Donnelly's article "The Soviet Soldier: Behavior, Performance, Effectiveness,"

a soviet child is mentally and physically prepared for the military at an early age. At 9 years of age, he can join the pioneers and later the Communist Party's youth organization, Komsomol. The pioneers and Komsomol visit army units during summer camp. At school, all physical training is done under a program entitled 'Be ready for labor and defense' when physical training activities are directly linked to military skills.<sup>2</sup>

Andrew Cockburn in The Threat Inside The Soviet Military Machine noted how small children stand guard at war memorials, holding real automatic rifles and participate in various military games in boy scout type exercises with weapons and real life military tactics.<sup>3</sup>

To further enforce the civil-military link-up, courses in civil defense are taught in the Soviet schools in the second and fifth grades.<sup>4</sup> All boys between 14-18 years, by law, must undergo 140 hours of basic military training to prepare themselves for conscription. Even

though service is only mandatory for men, most youth programs include women. The Soviet Voluntary Organization for Cooperation with the Army, Air Force and Navy (DOSAAF) provides expert training for any young people interested in pursuing sports which have a military value such as parachuting, shooting and orienteering.<sup>5</sup> Many of the DOSAAF instructors are retired military personnel.

After high school, even those men who enter civilian universities take "ROTC" and almost all of those who do not attend college are drafted. Military presence and influence are part of the basic fabric of Soviet culture. Military members participate in the government, Communist Party, the school systems, cultural organizations, scientific research and development, medicine, sports, national construction projects such as housing and road development and virtually every facet of civilian life. Uniformed soldiers going about their personal and official business are a common and accepted sight in the Soviet civilian sector. The Soviet society has been militarized for decades and its transition from a peacetime to wartime footing is preplanned and practiced with regularity through civil defense exercises. The high school student who enters one of the higher military training colleges to pursue an officer's career is continuing and expanding a way of life that is already comfortable to him and that might be in its tenth year of development. The greatest adverse impact of this militarization since youth may be that the system has produced a good "indian" who no longer has the independent will, initiative and creativity to be an innovative and forward looking "chief," even as a member of the officer corps.

### OFFICER ACQUISITIONS/INITIAL TRAINING

There are four avenues that lead to an officer's commission in the Soviet Army: Higher military training colleges, university "ROTC" type programs, soldiers promoted through the ranks and warrant officers who are promoted to commissioned status.<sup>6</sup> The latter three routes produce mainly reserve officers. The military colleges produce almost all of the career officers.

There are approximately 150 higher military training colleges. The course of study is 4 to 5 years in duration and results in a commission, a college degree and relevant civilian professional training. The civilian training and other reforms were added after the death of Khrushchev to attract young men to the officer's corps. In general, the civilian fields of study are engineering, mathematics, physics, history, geography and foreign languages. Students combine the barracks type life of a Soviet soldier with the destitute life of a Soviet student.

Each of the colleges has a particular military orientation--tanks, airborne, infantry, marine infantry, engineering, etc. Seven of the colleges are tank/armor orientated. Selection of a particular school is really two-fold. There are five major services of the Soviet Armed Forces: Strategic Rocket Forces, Ground Forces, National Air Defense Forces, Air Forces and Navy. A sixth major service could be added. It is the Tyl of the Soviet Armed Forces in the Ministry of Defense. Tyl means rear and these forces perform the following general functions for most of the other forces.<sup>7</sup>

1. Finance
2. Medicine

3. Fuel Supply
4. Military Communications
5. Food Supply
6. Clothing Supply
7. Administration
8. Military Veterinary Medicine
9. Auto transportation
10. Housing/Quarters management

The college an individual selects could result in his later commissioning in the Strategic Rocket Forces even if he initially felt he had signed on with the Army for engineering. The needs of the service have first priority. Sound familiar? Between 30 and 50 percent of the officers are commissioned in branches that are apart from any single service.<sup>8</sup> The equivalent would be a US lieutenant being commissioned in the Department of Defense in a particular branch such as finance. Each year the Krasnaya Zvezda (Red Star), the official newspaper of the Soviet military, publishes a list of all the military colleges. Applicants (usually high school seniors) write to a college of their choice, to apply to sit for the entrance exam. If their credentials warrant, the applicant is summoned to the college for a week of written tests, medical exams, tests of physical development and a lengthy oral interview. Secret KGB investigations precede anyone's selection for testing.

There are 3 to 4 applicants tested for each vacancy.<sup>9</sup> Each college produces between 200-250 lieutenants per year and has an average enrollment of 1000 students. Major Generals or higher are the commandants of these lieutenant-producing schools. The first six months of this 4-5 year college program are spent solely in an Army training camp. The students are loaded on a troop train and sent to a training division

where sergeants either turn them into good soldiers or they are not permitted to return with the successful cadets to college.<sup>10</sup> The ones who failed serve out their two year military obligation as enlisted soldiers.

#### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOOLS

Approximately three years after an officer's initial training, he becomes eligible for professional development schools. They fall into three general categories: Advanced courses, military academies and the Military Academy of the General Staff.

Advanced courses are operated by the various services, e.g., the Ground Forces; or by a branch within a service, e.g., armor. Their purposes are to improve the professional qualifications of officers, to familiarize them with new tactics and equipment, and to qualify them for command and staff positions at battalion and regimental levels. Captains, majors and lieutenant colonels may attend and schools generally offer a junior and senior level of instruction. The junior course prepares officers for battalion command or assistant chief of staff of a regiment. The senior course prepares students for regimental command or regimental chief of staff. Advance courses vary in length, but are generally less than one year in length. The officer returns to his previous organization upon completion of the course.<sup>11</sup>

The Soviet military academies generally are the closest school equivalent to the US command and staff colleges. The Frumze All-Arms Academy is probably the most notable military academy. Some others are the Armored, Artillery, Engineering, Military-Political, Naval, Air Force, Rocket, Space Defense and Chemical. Most academy curriculums are three years in duration and the students are mainly majors. During the

tour at the academy, the officer is normally promoted and upon graduation he is assigned to a unit or the general staff in a position one or two levels higher than that in which he served before attendance.<sup>12</sup> The criteria for selection to attend an academy are very stringent. An officer must have commanded at least a company, the platoon leaders under his command must have received excellent inspection ratings for two years, all officers in his chain of command must favorably endorse his application and the political officer and KGB representative must favor the submission or the army will generally back off submitting it. The officer also must pass written exams, medical exams and oral interviews.<sup>13</sup> Approximately, two-thirds of the applicants are eliminated by the stiff competitive examinations. Entrance exams at the Frunze Academy are in mathematics, physics, Russian language and literature, tactics and military equipment.<sup>14</sup> Each student will face numerous tests throughout the three years and must present and defend a thesis on a military subject prior to graduation. These academics also are available by correspondence courses with periodic residence phases.

The Military Academy of the General Staff or the General Staff Academy is the one and only senior service college of the Soviet Armed Forces. It is a joint command and staff academy and its students are all colonels or general officers or of equivalent navy ranks. Unlike the mid-level service academies, an officer does not submit an application for attendance or sit for any examinations. According to Viktor Suvorov, the Administrative Department of the Communist Party Central Committee prepares all the necessary paperwork and the Central Committee selects those who will attend and later head the military.<sup>15</sup> According to a US Defense Intelligence Agency report, the approximately 100-150 students are selected by the Main Directorate of Personnel of the

Defense Ministry.<sup>16</sup> Probably both selection systems are used, with the Central Committee being the final stamp of approval or disapproval. A graduate of the General Staff Academy will have at least eleven years of formal military schooling since his first day at a Higher Military Training College.

### PROMOTIONS

There is no "up or out" promotion system in the Soviet Army. An officer might serve until his retirement as a lieutenant.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, a major might be the superior of a lieutenant colonel because of his appointment to a particular position. Appointments are to positions. Promotions come with longevity if an officer holds an appointment to a position warranting a higher rank. The following are the minimum times for which an officer must remain at each rank:<sup>18</sup>

|  |               |
|--|---------------|
| Junior Lieutenant (for those who took<br>a shorter course of college level training) | 2 years       |
| Lieutenant   | 3 years       |
| Captain  | 3 years       |
| Major  | 4 years       |
| Lieutenant Colonel   | 5 years       |
| Higher Rank  | No fixed time |

The following example is to illustrate how this system works. If the deputy commander of a battalion (a major's position) is killed, the battalion commander has three company commanders and one of them must take the deputy's place. The company commanders might be a lieutenant, a senior lieutenant and a captain. Anyone of the three can become the deputy commander. If the senior lieutenant were selected as the best man for the appointment, it is his. He will not be promoted though

until he has the minimum time in grade to be a captain and then if he remains in the major's position for four years as a captain, he will be eligible for promotion to major. While the senior lieutenant is the deputy battalion commander, the captain company commander is to treat him with the same courtesies due a major in that position. Additionally, if the captain company commander is never appointed to a major position, he will go no higher than a captain in the remainder of his career.<sup>19</sup> Detailed rules for appointments are at Appendix 1.

While the Communist Party's military political officer and the KGB's military representative at the unit level will influence one's army promotion through the rank of colonel, promotion to general officer requires the concurrence of the leadership of the Army, the Communist Party and the KGB. The goal of the Soviet army promotion system is to stimulate rivalry between officers and to reward the best performers. The most ambitious, politically reliable, and successful in terms of training, job performance and performance appraisal can rise to lieutenant colonel in 19 years. A listing of comparative US and USSR military ranks is at Appendix 2.

#### OFFICER ASSIGNMENTS

There are over 1000 military trades or occupational specialities. Each has a number. The infantry, for example, is labeled the First Specialization and First Specialization connotes more than just infantry. These officers are charged with the coordination of the work between the different arms of services and with ensuring the Armed Services function together smoothly. First Specialization officers hold the lieutenant through major general positions in motor-rifle



divisions and they command all-arms Armies, Fronts and Strategic Directions. The Supreme Commander of the Soviet Army also will have an infantry background.<sup>20</sup>

Overall officers comprise about 16 percent of the Soviet Army as compared to about 11 percent for the US Army. The larger number of Soviet officers is a result of numerous junior officers being assigned to positions that would be filled by noncommissioned officers in western armies.<sup>21</sup>

As a general rule, a Soviet officer can expect to spend the majority of his early years in troop and service school assignment. A general listing of troop positions and the corresponding grade of the position is at Appendix 3. An officer will not move very often either. Standard tour lengths are listed at Appendix 4.

However, the appointment system that allows a commander to move his officers internally without regard to their rank could mean that an officer could sequentially hold different positions in the same unit. Along with all of the combat arms type of assignments, Soviet officers also perform the numerous combat support and combat service support functions such as those listed under Forces of the Tyl or rear area. Probably the biggest differences between the Soviet and US Army are triple chain of command and the Soviet political military career field.

#### THE CHAINS OF COMMAND: THE ARMY, THE KGB, THE PARTY

To succeed in the Soviet Army, each officer must understand and successfully cope with the fact that he will have three supervisors at a time throughout his career. He will have an Army commander or staff supervisor, an independent political military officer from the Communist Party and a KGB officer who will observe his performance/life-style.<sup>22</sup>

As the political officer holds a designated position in a unit (usually deputy unit commander), he will be discussed in some detail next. KGB members are assigned down to company level in the Armed Forces and report upward through their own chain of command.<sup>23</sup> They watch for evidence of ideological deviation. The KGB member or members of a unit (there could be several) receive much of their information from company informers or they might be a company informant.

Each of the three supervisors has his own area of interest/influence and they might work in diverging directions on an officer. They often overlap. The Army might discourage a lieutenant from marrying. The KGB officer might encourage the officer to get married with hopes that his wife will keep him informed of her husband's interests and friends if the marriage gets "rocky."

#### THE UNIT POLITICAL OFFICER

One cannot understand the constant stress/manipulation that a Soviet commander must endure unless he understands the role of the unit political officer. The political officer is generally the deputy unit commander and may assume command of the unit in the absence of the commander. The company political officer is only accountable to the political officer at battalion who is only accountable to the one at brigade and so on up through the division, Army, Front, etc., or the Communist Party's chain of command.

In a January, 1983, Soviet Military Review article that highlighted the virtues and rewards of being a company political officer, it was obvious that the political officer "advises" the commander/platoon leaders and performs critical functions of a company commander in the US Army. In the article, Senior Lieutenant P. Markosyan was the political officer/

deputy tank company commander. Lieutenant V. Yevstefyev, the company commander was three years and one rank junior to Markosyan. Political officer Markosyan was responsible for knowing each man, his character, individual inclinations and abilities. When soldiers violated military discipline or fell behind in their studies, he counselled them. Markosyan "advised" the platoon leader on how to handle individual soldiers and "advised" the unit officers on the job they should assign to certain soldiers. If a problem soldier was "turned around," the political officer publicized the event and rewarded the soldier. The political officer in a unit is charged with ensuring that the soldiers are properly fed, clothed, are medically sound, receive proper combat training, have a recreation and cultural service program, and that they understand internal and international political developments.<sup>24</sup>

The Interior Service Regulations of the USSR Armed Forces state that a commander has those same duties. The regulations state that the commander must know each soldier's demographic data, biography; political, educational and cultural level; character, health abilities, inclinations, habits . . . and resourcefulness.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, the unit commander and his deputy for political affairs, both bear full responsibility for the combat training, political education and discipline of the soldiers in their unit.<sup>26</sup>

While the company commander almost always is a member of the communist party, his deputy and political officer is there to report back to the Party on how he commands, his social life and, of course, his support of Leninism. A deliberate effort is

made to project the image of a political officer . . . not simply as an authority on political questions; rather, he is to be portrayed as the best pilot of a squadron or the best tank specialist in a tank company.<sup>27</sup>

There are numerous articles in the Soviet military literature extolling the virtues and superior leadership and technical skills of the political officer. Surprisingly, none of the literature researched mentioned any problems with this dual hierarchy of responsibility. Perhaps that is because it is a "given" in the Soviet command structure and prior attempts to eliminate the power of the political officer were short lived.

In early 1957 Marshall G. K. Zhukov, Minister of Defense and a full member of the Presidium, made strong moves to reduce the power of the political officer. He reduced the student enrollment of the Lenin Military-Political Academy, the position of company deputy commander for political matter was eliminated, colonel became the highest rank a political officer could attain and he generally reduced their prestige. Zhukov was ousted in October 1957 and his reforms were reversed and the Party took steps to ensure that its control over the military could never again be seriously threatened.<sup>28</sup>

#### AUTHORITY/RESPONSIBILITY

A management tool to control officer behavior is the amount of authority he receives to accomplish his mission. As soon as a Soviet officer takes command of a unit, he is held accountable for its current state of training, discipline and overall fitness. At the same time, he has little authority to accomplish his mission. In terms of using rewards or punishments to control his troops, he usually comes up short. Approximately 90% of all troops are two year draftees who are very dissatisfied with their lot in the military. The company commander's main reward to them for good performance is an eight hour daylight pass. However, only 10% of the unit can have a pass at any one time. Also, the pass may be denied in full by a higher commander. If a soldier goes

off post and gets picked up by a "courtesy patrol" for any reason, even a minor uniform violation, the company commander is at fault. Most officers avoid the "risk" and therefore few soldiers receive a pass or any of their 10 day leave in two years.

Similarly, as the young Soviet officer has few rewards he can distribute, by current Soviet military standards, he has few punishments. A platoon officer cannot arrest a soldier. A company commander may arrest a soldier for up to three days. Each arrest is recorded and the merit of a company is measured by the number of arrests.<sup>29</sup> If Company A has ten arrests in a month and Company B has five arrests, then Company B is seen by authorities as the better company. To not lose out statistically, company commanders tend to "hush up" or ignore disciplinary problems or crimes. The NCO and enlisted soldier soon learn the system and discipline suffers.

#### QUALITY OF LIFE

Health/Physical fitness, housing and pay are three facets of Soviet officer personnel management that greatly impact on the officer retention success rate which is quite high compared to the low enlisted retention rate.

Health/Physical Fitness--Soviet officer personnel management includes the individual management of an officer's physical health from commissioning through retirement. Officers have three one hour physical culture classes per week, usually in the morning. Classes include exercises from the Physical Training (PT) Manual of the Soviet Army. Officers are divided into groups by age (under 31, 31-36, 37-40, 41-45, 46+) and each group must demonstrate their control exercises and that they have achieved performance standards. Exercises are conducted by PT

specialists. Each officer must also have an individual exercise program and keep an exercise log. Medical personnel assist officers in constructing their individual programs (running, exercises, gymnastics, weight lifting, swimming, cycling, skiing, hiking, etc.). Doctors examine an officer to determine his initial level of fitness and the officer must have a checkup at least once every two months. The results are used to alter/increase his PT program. During periods of intensive work or field exercises, the PT program is lessened. At the work's conclusion, the PT program concentrates on stress removal exercises.<sup>30</sup> Whether the rigorous group and individual exercise programs are regularly adhered to is not known. They, however, might be the highlight of the officer's day. Physical fitness and athletics are stressed in the Soviet Union from early elementary school on into adult life.

Housing--There is a difference of opinion on how well the junior Soviet officer is housed. Viktor Suvorov stated there was no family housing for lieutenants in regiments. Gabriel reported that Soviet junior officers live much better than their troops.

Officers' quarters are usually private apartments with room enough for family and usually equipped with most of the attendant amenities. Soviet authorities openly advertise the availability of good quality housing as an inducement to recruit good officers.<sup>31</sup>

All sources reviewed agreed that housing improved greatly as one progressed up the ladder to general. Depending on a general's rank and appointment, some high ranking generals have a large home near their work and up to three country homes, generally at or near exclusive Soviet resort areas. Many of the homes were built by enlisted men and enlisted men performed many-hired man type personal chores for officers.

Housing provided to most officers exceeded the housing of counterpart civilians and was a big reason why some men chose to leave the civilian sector for the officer corps. Housing for the enlisted, however, was generally below the civilian sector's.

Pay--A Soviet lieutenant receives about 20 times the pay of a Soviet private. (A private receives \$10/month.) In the US Army the pay ratio difference between a lieutenant and a private is approximately four to one.<sup>32</sup> The Soviet officer also is paid approximately one-third more than his civilian counterpart.<sup>33</sup>

An officer's pay also stretches further as he has access to certain Government stores that civilians and enlisted do not. His housing also may be far better than he might enjoy in the civilian sector. The great pay and lifestyle disparity between officers and enlisted adds to an already great gap in their smooth working relationship.

#### WOMEN IN THE SOVIET ARMED FORCES

Managing the soviet officer corps appears to be the management of male officers. In the contemporary free world and Soviet literature that was researched in preparing this paper, there was a definite absence of information on women in the Soviet military. In peacetime, women officers are assigned as teachers at higher military schools and military academies, especially in the departments of foreign languages and mathematics. A rare few have become famous in the USSR as pilots and astronauts. Women officers are commissioned in the reserves and may serve on active duty until age fifty. All military women are volunteers and while in peace time, their assignments tend to be restricted to a lesser number of jobs, in wartime they have been assigned to a wide range of

positions. During World War II, women were snipers, pilots, machine gunners and tank drivers.<sup>34</sup>

### RETIREMENT

Little was discovered about the Soviet retirement system or its benefits. That probably is because defectors and immigrants never make it that far in the system. An officer can retire as a lieutenant through general officer after 25 years of service or serve for much longer. Today pensions are thought to be paid with consistency. Pensions are used as strong incentives to attract and retain officers. The officer purges of Stalin (33,000 officers of brigade command or higher in one year) and Khrushchev (500 generals in one day in 1960)<sup>35</sup> almost ruined the career officer corps retention program. As officer pay exceeds civilian pay in general, their pension system is probably better too. After retirement, many officers volunteer their services to DOSAAF and pre-military training programs.

### OFMS: IS IT WORKING

On the surface it appears that the appointment/promotion system would only allow the best officers to rise to the top. The rigorous commissioning schools also have elaborate procedures to handpick the most outstanding officers for further advancement. However, the words "best" and "outstanding" may be misleading by American military standards. Those words may just label the officer who has the least recorded errors, least recorded unit disciplinary problems, gave the best parties was the most clever in passing inspections and took the least risks. He definitely was a good communist and politically very savvy.



A January, 1984, Washington Post newspaper article titled "An Officer and a Crook: Ripping off the Red Army" reported that corruption in the Soviet Army officer corps may be quite widespread. It further stated that the Soviet Army Red Star newspaper had drastically increased its public exposure of corruption in the Soviet army. In 1982, approximately two dozen articles appeared in the Red Star pertaining to drunkenness, bribery, embezzlement and mistreatment by officers of subordinates. In the first eight months of 1983, there were 65 such stories. Unlike previous years when the few public accounts involved junior officers, recent accounts were about colonels and generals.<sup>36</sup>

A recent analysis of articles appearing in the Red Star revealed that articles on military discipline and morale received the most coverage (38% to 47%) every month from August 1982 through August 1983.<sup>37</sup> Articles described officers who kept their military apartments for personal profit after they had been reassigned; emphasized officers should be demanding, but not nasty; criticized officers who failed to reward their men or ignored their morale, exposed officers who took unit property (a TV) for their own use, etc. The increased exposure of corruption in the Soviet Army and particularly in the officers corp by the Red Star lends credibility or at least partially confirms numerous adverse accounts of officer behavior that has been received from the debriefing of emigrants and the personal stories of officers who defected.

#### HOW OPMS REALLY WORKS

Politics cannot be ignored by any officer with career aspirations. Even for the short term (2-4 years) reserve officer to ignore "politics"

and devote himself solely to the military aspects of an officer's life could be equally detrimental. The Communist Party controls the civilian sector and, therefore, when one's military service is complete, his political record in the military will influence his opportunities in civilian life. The non-career officer is also subject to recall to active duty until age fifty. To be a good "Communist" will carry the career and non-career officer further than just being good at his military duties. As the army, the Party and the KGB each manage an officer's future, the officer in turn must learn to manage/manipulate his supervisors to satisfactory or higher ratings of his performance/conduct. The fact that an officer's subordinates can freely inform on him to the political officer or a KGB informer in his unit is another pressure he must learn to successfully cope with if he is to succeed. To try and walk on eggs without breaking any as the Party vise presses down on one's head and the KGB vise presses up on one's feet produces many adverse effects on the total officer corps. Initiative is stifled because the cost of making a mistake or offending someone is too great. "Play it safe," "follow-the-rules," "don't make waves," "ignore injustices" and pass inspections seem to be the unwritten rules to success.

The emphasis placed on passing inspections and having good statistics cannot be overemphasized. Commissions comprised of staff officers from various military districts regularly are sent to inspect units in another military district. Commissioners cannot mark everyone "excellent" or "fair," therefore there will be companies with good grades and some companies who must fail. Abundant alcohol, good food and a friendly atmosphere are thought to be the means to successful inspections. Unit officers "voluntary" dig into their wallets to create the pot of rubles to pay for the parties for the commissioners.<sup>38</sup> A high

quality of entertainment is thought to be critical to success and a good performance rating.

In the New Red Legions: An Attitudinal Portrait of the Soviet Soldier, Richard Gabriel analyzes the responses to an attitudinal survey of 113 ex-Soviet military personnel who now live in the free world. The ex-military respondents covered over 40 years of military service from WWII through 1979. Of that group, 79.6 percent felt their officers did not set a good example to young soldiers, 81.8 percent of the unit NCOs felt their officers stifled their initiative, and 71.5 percent of the commanding officers perceived their brother officers as stifling the initiative of others.<sup>39</sup> Gabriel goes on to portray a rather sad state of affairs in the areas of command and leadership, officer/NCO relationships and officer/enlisted relationships. Cockburn's analysis also decried the incohesive officer/NCO working relationship and lack of confidence/trust in one another. He stated that the gulf between the Soviet conscripts and the officers who command them is wide and deep.<sup>40</sup> As the draftee has squalid living conditions, poor food and is subject to an almost prison like caste and discipline system, he can hardly wait to get out of the army. There is only about a one percent reenlistment rate and they become the career NCO corps.<sup>41</sup> The junior NCOs are just draftees with about one year of service who lord it over new draftees and make them do all the dirty jobs. A senior draftee might take a new troop's new uniforms and give him his old dirty and worn ones.

The officer corps appears to ignore the brutal conditions of the barracks caste system. Unit cohesion was reported as deplorable. The cost of having a deficient NCO corps to develop and train the soldiers and bridge the officer-enlisted gap maybe the greatest weakness of the Soviet Army. Awareness of this tremendous deficiency by the Soviet

Army's leadership has resulted in a larger officer corps where lieutenants do numerous NCO jobs such as drive tanks or be a tank commander. For special events such as the 7 November military parade through Red Square, the divisions involved might practice all year and they are known as parade divisions.<sup>42</sup> There are numerous stories of officers wearing privates and sergeants uniforms for media events covered by the free world press. Once 10,000 officers were used to build up only one division.

Indiscipline, bribery and alcoholism are reported to be widespread in the Soviet army. Covering up mistakes, passing inspections and personal loyalty to one's superior seem to be the road to advancement and a better standard of life for the career officer. Taking care of one's troops is a very distant second to taking care of oneself.

#### FUTURE TRENDS

The leadership of the Soviet army is aware of the numerous problems that have resulted from poor leadership and lack of unit cohesion. The Red Star and other military journals are filled with articles that expose corruption and reward the officer (often the political officer) who helps his men and whose unit performs well.

Since the early 1970's, over 70 two and three year Higher Military Training Colleges that produced lieutenants were upgraded to 4-5 year universities. A concerted effort is underway to upgrade the education of the officer corps. Concurrently, efforts are on going in school selections and promotions to develop a younger and more flexible officer corps. Numerous captains and even some senior lieutenants have been sent to the Frunze All-Arms Academy.<sup>43</sup>

Afghanistan is being used as a training ground to try and upgrade the independence of junior officers.<sup>44</sup> The Soviet leadership has realized that on the high-tech battlefield, orders may not arrive; and therefore, the junior officer must have confidence to act on his own initiative. To ensure that he does make the right decision and continue his mission, less emphasis is being placed on following the preplanned plan and more emphasis is being placed on drawing on his own capabilities and training to solve a problem.

In spite of the gloomy portrait that has been painted about the internal weaknesses of the Soviet army and the Soviet officer corps in particular, most Soviet researchers felt that Soviet officer leadership has improved greatly since World War II. Since the Soviet army defeated the Nazi army in World War II with poorer leadership and poor equipment, it might be warranted to take all stories of decadence in the Soviet army with a grain of salt.

Another possible road to a more professional officer corps is thought to be the return to "military families" in the Soviet army. Being the son of a Soviet officer is thought to be one of the best springboards for a military career.<sup>45</sup> Using family influence to enter the best military colleges and to secure the better assignments could also have another adverse impact on developing a better officer corps.

Whether the officer personnel management system of the 1980's and 1990's can solve the leadership shortcomings or not will have to be decided at a much later time or on a future battlefield. The wheels of positive change do seem to be creaking into motion. Should they not succeed at the status quo continues, being an officer in the Soviet army will still appear as a desirable profession to many Soviet citizens.

Viktor Suvorov, who defected after 15 years of commissioned service compared the Soviet Union to a prison in his attempt to explain why he and several of his colleagues became officers.

The Politburo is the governing body of the prison (USSR). The KGB are the wardens. The Party is the administrative and educational organization. The army guards the walls . . . I chose to become a Soviet officer because those who serve as guards are better fed and have a pleasanter and more varied life than those in the cells . . . it is far easier to escape from a prison if you are one of the guards . . . . The life of an officer is far better than the drudgery which is the lot of the ordinary Soviet citizen (the prisoner).<sup>46</sup>

Everything is relative, Right? Whatever the real situation may be for Soviet officers, it is how he perceives it that matters. He competes hard to enter the officer corps and retention does not appear to be a problem. If the new programs to improve officer education, initiative and responsibility pay dividends, the Soviet army will be an even more formidable foe than it is today.

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## **APPENDIX 1**

### **RULES FOR OFFICER APPOINTMENTS**

1. Seniority depends, not on rank but on appointment. Only when two officers have no professional connection with one another, is seniority determined by rank.

2. An officer's eligibility for a higher appointment depends, not on his rank or length of service, but on his ability to command.

3. The time spent in a particular appointment is not limited in any way. Thus, an officer may command a platoon for the whole of his service or he may be given greater responsibility within a few months.

4. The appointment held by an officer makes him eligible for a particular rank. However, he is not given this rank unless he occupies and adequately responsible place on the ladder of service and has served for a given number of years.

The system for the advancement and promotion of officers in peacetime works in exactly the same way as it did during the war.

Each appointment in the Soviet Army is open only to officers of not more than a certain rank. Thus, a platoon commander may not be more than a senior lieutenant. Similarly, as regards command appointments:

A company commander may not be more than a captain.

A deputy battalion commander may not be more than a major.

A battalion commander/deputy regimental commander may not be more than a lieutenant-colonel.

A regimental commander/deputy divisional commander may not be more than a colonel.

A division commander/deputy Army commander may not be more than a major-general.

An Army Commander may not be more than a lieutenant-general.

A Front or Military District Commander may not be more than a general of the Army.

Minister of Defence, Chief of the General Staff, Chief of a Strategic Direction, Chief of an Armed Service may not be more than a Marshal of the Soviet Union.

The Supreme Commander during wartime ranks as Generalissimo of the Soviet Union.

The Supreme Commander during wartime ranks as Generalissimo of the Soviet Union.

The same applies to non-command appointments. Thus:

The chief of staff of a battalion must not be more than a major.

The chief of staff of a regiment must not be more than a lieutenant-colonel.

The chief of staff of a division must not be more than a colonel.

The chief of staff of a Army must not be more than a major-general.

The chief of staff of a Front must not be more than a lieutenant-general.

The chief of staff of a Strategic Direction must not be more than a colonel-general.

The chief of the General Staff is a Marshal of the Soviet Union.\*

\*Viktor Suvorov, Inside the Soviet Army, pp. 278-280.

## APPENDIX 2

### COMPARATIVE MILITARY RANKS--US AND USSR

| United States       | Soviet Union  |
|---------------------|---|
| (None)              | Generalissimus of the Soviet Union  |
| General of the Army | Marshal of the Soviet Union   |
| (None)              | Chief Marshal of Aviation, Armored Forces, Artillery  |
| General             | General of the Army, Marshal of Aviation, Marshal of Armored Forces, Artillery, Engineers, Signals, etc.  |
| Lieutenant General  | General Colonel, General Colonel Aviation, General Colonel Armored Forces, Artillery Engineers, Justice, General Colonel Engineer, etc.                     |
| Major General       | General Lieutenant, General Lieutenant Aviation, Armored Forces Artillery, Engineers, General Lieutenant-Engineer, etc.                                     |
| Brigadier General   | General Major, General Major Aviation, General Major Armored Forces, Artillery, Engineers, Signals, Supply, Technical Troops, General Major-Engineers, etc. |
| Colonel             | Colonel (Polkovnik)   |
| Lieutenant Colonel  | Lieutenant Colonel (Podpolkovnik)   |
| Major               | Major   |
| Captain             | Captain   |
| 1st Lieutenant      | Senior Lieutenant   |
| 2d Lieutenant       | Lieutenant  |
| (None)              | Junior Lieutenant   |

Source: Compiled by Harriet Fast Scott, Originally published in Air Force Magazine.

### APPENDIX 3

#### RANK AND CORRESPONDING POSITION FOR NONFLYING PERSONNEL

| RANK   | POSITION   |
|--|--|
| Junior Lieutenant<br>Lieutenant<br>Senior Lieutenant | Platoon Commander  |
| Senior Lieutenant                                    | Deputy company or battery  |
| Captain  | Company or battery commander   |
| Major  | Deputy battalion commander   |
| Lieutenant Colonel                                   | Battalion commander; deputy<br>commander; chief of regimental<br>staff               |
| Colonel  | Regimental commander; deputy<br>division commander; chief of<br>division staff       |
| General Major  | Division commander, deputy corps<br>commander; chief of corps staff                  |
| General Lieutenant                                   | Corps of commander; chief of army<br>staff; chief of political<br>department of army |
| General Colonel                                      | Army commander   |
| General Colonel                                      | Commanding officer of a military<br>district   |
| General of the Army                                  |  |
| Marshal of the Soviet Union                          |  |

Source: Compiled by Harriet Fast Scott. Originally published in Air Force Magazine.

# APPENDIX 4

## STANDARD TOUR LENGTHS

| Nonflying Personnel                                    |         | Flying Personnel              |         |
|--|---------|-------------------------------|---------|
| Platoon commander                                      | 3 years | Pilot and Senior Pilot        | 3 years |
|  |         | Flight commander              | 3 years |
| Deputy company or battery commander                    | 3 years | Deputy squadron commander     | 2 years |
| Company or battery commander                           | 4 years | Squadron commander            | 4 years |
| Deputy battalion commander                             | 3 years |                               |         |
| Battalion commander                                    | 4 years |                               |         |
| Deputy regimental commander; chief of regimental staff | 3 years | Deputy air regiment commander | 2 years |
| Regimental commander                                   | 5 years | Air regiment commander        | 5 years |

Source: Compiled by Harriet Fast Scott. Originally published in Air Force Magazine.

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